

It was one of those great cosmic coincidences that, on Monday, our first black president took his oath of office on a day set aside to honor one of America's greatest black leaders.

Much has been said about the ties that bind together Barack Obama and Martin Luther King, Jr.: not only their race and their soaring oratory, but also their fervent pursuit of seemingly impossible change, and their belief that the arc of our moral universe – however long – bends toward justice.

As then-Senator Barack Obama said when he spoke from the pulpit of Dr. King's church, Ebenezer Baptist in Atlanta, in early 2008:

"What Dr. King understood is that if just one person chose to walk instead of ride the bus, those walls of oppression would not be moved. But maybe if a few more walked, the foundation might start to shake.

"If a few more women were willing to do what Rosa Parks had done, maybe the cracks would start to show. If teenagers took freedom rides from North to South, maybe a few bricks would come loose. Maybe if white folks marched because they had come to understand that their freedom too was at stake in the impending battle, the wall would begin to sway.

"And if enough Americans were awakened to the injustice; if they joined together, North and South, rich and poor, Christian and Jew, then perhaps that wall would come tumbling down, and justice would flow like water, and righteousness like a mighty stream."

Martin Luther King, Jr. believed that people working together can accomplish far more than any of us can achieve alone. He believed in the willingness of all Americans, even those in a position of privilege, to open their eyes to the unconscionable wrong happening around them if they are challenged to do so – especially, and most effectively, by non-violent action. This belief, somewhat counter to normal intuition, produced results because of basic human decency.

Forty Years After *Roe v. Wade*

Forty years ago this Tuesday, the Supreme Court affirmed the dignity and independence of each American woman in *Roe v. Wade*. The result of that landmark decision was an understanding that our Constitution guaranteed decisions about a woman's own body should be left up to that woman, in consultation with her doctor, her family, and her religion – not the federal government.

There is now a generation of women who do not remember the time before *Roe v. Wade*, a time when men assumed they could say what women could and could not do about their personal, private health care and reproduction.

We still have a lot of work to do. Unfortunately, over the past 40 years, there have been numerous legislative attempts to deny this right to women and even to treat women who exercise control over their own bodies as criminals. We have to make sure that we defend also Title X, maternal and child health care programs, public access to reproductive health care, and that we reauthorize the Violence Against Women Act.

But we must remember the time before *Roe v. Wade* and what is at stake.

Deadline Extended for Disaster Assistance Applications

If you are planning to register for FEMA disaster assistance or for a Small Business Administration (SBA) disaster loan to support your recovery from Hurricane Sandy, you should know that the deadline for submitting your application has been extended to March 1, 2013.

To begin the disaster relief process, first register online at www.DisasterAssistance.gov or by calling 800-621-3362 or 800-462-7585 (TTY). Then, to apply for a SBA disaster loan, complete the online application at DisasterLoan.SBA.gov.

You can apply for disaster assistance before settling with your insurance company, so there's no need to wait. Applying by the deadline can avoid a shortfall in rebuilding money if you discover later that you are uninsured. There is no obligation to accept an SBA disaster home loan, and you may become eligible for additional FEMA grants if you are not approved for a loan.

Sincerely,

Rush Holt
Member of Congress